



Word on the Waves

a publication of the Fisheries Observation Science Program at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Observer Spotlight: Steven Todd

Currently stationed in San Diego, CA
Observing since 2001

Steven Todd is one of our “old hands.” He came to the west coast in 2001 as an observer for the newly created West Coast Observer Program and has been with us ever since.

Over the last 18 years, Steve's been instrumental in helping us grow, change and flourish. We're pleased to highlight Steve and publicly thank him for his unflagging dedication, hard work, and ongoing enthusiasm.

FOS: Where are you from? Where's your alma mater?

Steve: I'm a San Diego native. My alma mater is



La Universidad Nacional Autónoma (UNA) in Heredia, Costa Rica. I went there on a cultural exchange program and was encouraged to stay by my biology professor. The country's abundant natural resources, the school's emphasis on fieldwork, and the opportunity for personalized attention made it an easy decision. I selected Fisheries Biology as my major, became fluent in Spanish, and enjoyed a very fulfilling educational experience. This is also where and when I met my wife.

FOS: How long have you been observing?

Steve: I began observing in 2000 in New England's Atlantic Sea Scallop fleet. From there, I made my way to Hawaii to observe in the offshore pelagic longline fleet. I signed on with the WCGOP in 2001. Monterey, CA was my initial home port until I relocated to San Diego in 2005.

FOS: How did you find observing?

Steve: I got my first taste of fisheries fieldwork at university. A cruise on UNA's *R/V BioMar* exposed me to an array of equipment (trawl gear, gill nets, and hook and line gear, etc.) and it's where I sorted my first haul. I identified, weighed, and documented the many shrimp and fish species taken (sound familiar?). My awe, respect, and love for the marine environment bloomed and, unbeknownst to me, the course of my career was set.



From the Program

Jon McVeigh,
Program Manager

Hello Observers and Friends,

I hope you're excited about the upcoming holiday season. Can you even believe 2020 is almost here?!

I know many of you are finishing your contracts and looking forward to some downtime. Unfortunately, I'm assigning you some winter homework I'd like you to complete before returning for your annual briefing. The first session is in December so some of you may have to work quickly.

Here's your assignment:

- Complete the Training Survey sent to you by Christa Colway.
- Submit three topics of most interest to you that you'd like to see addressed at your annual briefing.
- Come prepared to describe and discuss your number one sampling concern/question.
- Email us any ideas you have about diversity and inclusion for US Fisheries Observers.
- Contact us if you have interest in presenting at the next International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC), in Hobart, Tasmania in March 2021..
- Come prepared to describe and discuss your number one safety concern/question.
- Email me any topics, questions, ideas, research proposals, concerns, etc. at any time, but preferably before Thanksgiving.

This program was built by observers. We depend on you current observers to help us

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Fisheries News

Remember [The Blob](#)? Five years ago, the large marine heat wave rocked fisheries up and down the west coast. With climate change at the forefront of current news, NOAA is taking a look back at this natural phenomenon and its impact on fisheries. Read about it [here](#).

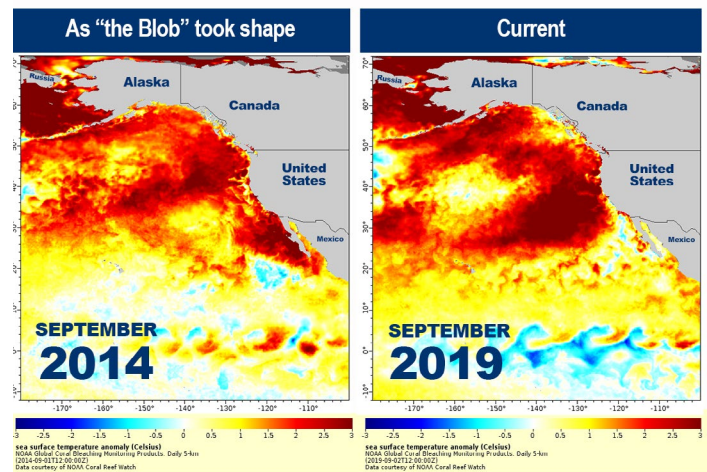
Speaking of The Blob, there's a new heating trend stretching from Alaska to California that could become The Blob II. According to research scientist, Andrew Leising, at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, "It's on a trajectory to be as strong as the prior event." Read more [here](#).

On August 19, 2019, NOAA settled its pending civil administrative claims against Carlos "The Godfather" Rafael and his fishing captains. Read details about the settlement [here](#).

In May, *The Alaska Journal of Commerce* ran an [article on observer retention](#) in the North Pacific fleet. It mentions West Coast observer retention and offers insights into why retention, in general, is low. It also includes an Alaska EM to observer cost comparison, which is interesting.

Advocating for the Endangered Species Act requires continual education and creativity. NOAA is employing both by partnering with the Girl Scouts of America to create a [new patch](#). Pretty cool, huh? Read more about the collaboration [here](#).

We were pleased to host intern, Delany Kuehnle, over the summer. She was



The Blob then and now. Sea surface temperature anomaly maps show temperatures above normal in orange and red.

here participating in the [Joint Institute for the Study of Atmosphere and Ocean](#) (JISAO) program. Before she left, she made a video about her work here. [Check it out](#).

NOAA Fisheries recently upgraded their website. It's chock-full of information, videos, and useful links. Here's a [short intro video](#).

Featured Observer - continued

Steve's advice to new observers:

Keep a 4x5 card on your clipboard with a short list of essential trip items (survival suit, scale, lifejacket, etc.). It ensures you have everything when deploying/disembarking.

FOS: You've been doing this a long time. What makes you stay?

Steve: I've seen and get to see amazing things. Every trip is a journey into the unknown. I also believe in observing's importance and value. This coupled with my curiosity and appreciation for

nature and the marine environment keep me going. Plus there's always the hope of seeing something new.

FOS: Bucket list?

Steve: I've had many epic sightings of marine mammals while observing. The sperm whale continues to elude me. To have an extended observation of that leviathan is a bucket list item I'd like to check off.



From the Program - continued

maintain its quality and success. Your feedback is important. Please don't be shy. You can always drop me or your debriefer an email with concerns, questions, and suggestions.

As always, your dedication and diligence is greatly appreciated. Have a wonderful holiday season. .

Stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'T. McVeigh'.



From the Galley

John LaFargue, CA Coordinator

I'd like to introduce to you one of my favorite Mexican dishes, campechana, a.k.a. seafood cocktail. It's a common street food snack in the coastal communities I visit in Mexico. Unlike the American version, it's got a bit more substance. You can eat it as an appetizer or a meal. Light and refreshing, it's perfect after a long day fishing or gardening or observing.

Campechana's distinguishing feature is its broth. Made from the broth the seafood is cooked in, it has a dash of Clamato juice or ketchup making it a savory, briny base that compliments the salsa components. The seafood is typically shrimp, octopus, squid, scallops and oysters. At home, I frequently include small chunks of fish, such as halibut or rockfish, since I usually have them on hand. Lime juice, hot sauce, and Worcestershire sauce intensifies the flavor. Serrano or jalapeño peppers give it a little heat.

The dish is usually served in a large cup or goblet with a spoon for ladling up all that delicious broth. Add some saltine crackers and yum!

There are a lot of variations out there. Don't be afraid to experiment. Add celery or avocado. Substitute the saltines for corn chips. It's all good. Give it a try and let me know what you think.



Campechana a.k.a. Mexican Seafood Cocktail

Ingredients

1 lbs of seafood (octopus shrimp, squid, scallops, oysters, etc.)
 Juice of 2 limes
 1 c Clamato juice
 Couple dashes Worcestershire sauce
 Couple dashed Mexican hot sauce (such as Tapatio)
 1/2 red onion diced
 1/3 c cilantro chopped
 1/2 c chopped cucumber
 1 serrano or jalapeño pepper finely chopped
 Cracked pepper & salt to taste

Instructions

1. Bring 3 cups (approximately) of lightly salted water to a light boil.
2. Add the seafood. Bring to a simmer and remove from heat. Let sit for 5 minutes.
3. Drain, reserving the broth. Place the seafood in a bowl.
4. Add the lime and Clamato juice to 2 cups of the reserved broth,
5. Add the chopped onion, serrano or jalapeño peppers, cucumber and cilantro to the seafood mix.
6. Add Worcestershire sauce and hot sauce to taste.
7. Salt and pepper to taste.
8. Put 1/2 cup of seafood in a cup. Fill with the juice-broth combo.
9. Serve with extra lime, Mexican hot sauce and saltine crackers.



National Seafood Month: A Recap

In case you missed it, October was National Seafood month. NOAA shared a lot of great information to celebrate the event, much of it highlighting the West Coast. Take a look.

[Now Comes the Hard Work: Rebuilding the Market for West Coast Groundfish](#)

[Reeling to Rebuilding: Success for West Coast Fisheries](#)



[U.S. Fish Stocks Continue Positive Trend with 45 Rebuilt Since 2000](#)



[West Coast Fisheries "Comeback of the Century"](#)



Fishermen aboard Miss Sue, of Newport, Oregon. Credit: John Rae.

[Devastating Collapse of Groundfish Fishery Forces a More Sustainable Future](#)



Pulling final tow of the day on West Coast Groundfish Survey. Credit: NOAA Fisheries



Technology Update: What to look for in 2020

Jason Eibner, Debriefing Officer

There's never a dull moment for our tech development team. Now that our paperless and offline systems are up and running, we're working to make them more efficient, reliable, and all-gear friendly. Here's what to look for in 2020.

OPTECS. We're pleased to announce a new OPTECS application will be available in 2020. The new app accepts both trawl and fixed gear trips via the tablets. Raw fixed gear data will be included starting in January. The software completes calculations for species/catch/ OTC weights, checks for trip errors, and backs up/syncs to the database. The goal is to make fixed gear data easier to enter and review.

Fixed Gear Tally application. We'll be continuing to develop the Fixed Gear Tally application in 2020. The goal is to integrate this tally function on the tablets later in the year.

Trainings. All 2020 trainings will incorporate tablets into the curriculum. These will be the first new observers to use OPTECS from the get-go.

What can you do to prepare? Get familiar with OPTECS. If you cover trawl trips and are not using OPTECS, talk

with your debriefer. They can help you get set up and started. If you're currently using OPTECS, continue to inspect, clean, maintain, and backup your tablet to ensure you can capitalize on its benefits.

Looking for Fixed Gear testers. We need testers for the Fixed Gear software this fall and into the new year. If you're interested, contact Eric Brasseur (eric.brasseur@noaa.gov), Jason Eibner (Jason.eibner@noaa.gov), or your debriefer to find out how to get involved.



Saying Farewell to Jen Cramer



After 18 years, long-time staff member Jen Cramer said good-bye this fall.

Jen joined the WCGOP in 2001 as an observer. She was in the very first WCGOP observer training (with her husband, Allen). After observing out of Astoria for a couple years, she took a debriefer position in Newport, OR.

She contributed to the program in many ways as an observer, debriefer, and Training Team member. One of her major projects was leading the annual update process for our training manuals. Not only did she keep them up-to-date, she also consolidated the Non-Catch Share and Catch Share manuals into a single volume. This earned her the 2016 NMFS Team Member of the Year Award.

Jen is greatly missed, but we wish her well in the next chapter of her life.

Contact Us

Word on the Waves is published quarterly by the [Fisheries Observation Science Program](#) at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center to maintain communications with current observers. Please send submissions, suggestions and questions to our newsletter editor, Rebecca Hoch, at rebecca.hoch@noaa.gov. You can also contact your debriefer.

2020 Annual Briefings and New Observer Trainings



The leaves are changing, the temps are cooling, and many of you are finishing your contracts and looking ahead to 2020.

If your plans include observing with us, you'll need to have an annual briefing before deploying in the new year. As you can see, these quickly follow the holiday season. Please connect with your pro-

vider to ensure you're in the session that works best for you.

We're also sharing the training schedule for new observers. If you know anyone considering becoming an observer, please share these dates and help them connect with a provider.

New Observer Trainings

- February 3-21
- March 9-27
- May 11-29
- August 3-21 (tentative)

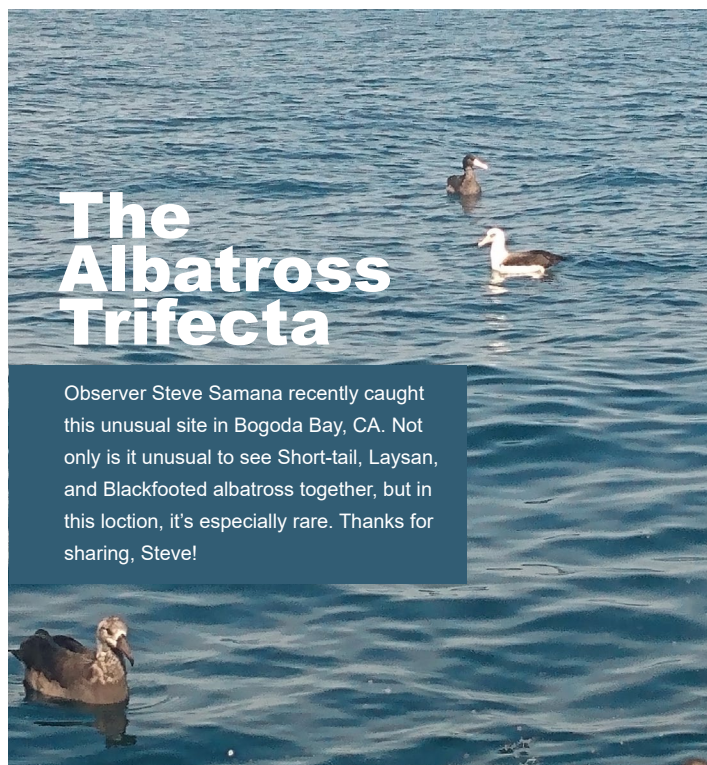
Annual Briefings

- December 9-12
- January 13-16
- February 10-14
(this is five days because it occurs during a new observer training)
- March 30-April 2

Please bring your NOAA laptop.

Seen on Deck

One of the perks of observing is getting to see amazing and unusual sights on a regular basis. However, there are moments that transcend even the observer norm. Here are two seen this fall. One comes from our West Coast Groundfish Program, the other from our At-Sea Hake division. Enjoy!



The Albatross Trifecta

Observer Steve Samana recently caught this unusual site in Bogoda Bay, CA. Not only is it unusual to see Short-tail, Laysan, and Blackfooted albatross together, but in this location, it's especially rare. Thanks for sharing, Steve!



Bluefins & The Blob

Need evidence that the The Blob is back? These Bluefin tuna in the hake fishery are it. Last we saw these (and also the first!) was in 2016 when the first Blob was here. Thank you At-Sea Hake observers Brock Bahlman and Stacey Ovalle for taking these this fall.